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To: us@krg.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq Representative to the U.S. Addresses Rhodes College in Memphis

Qubad Talabani Discusses Future of Iraq as American Troops Depart

MEMPHIS, Tenn., 20 November 2009 – Wednesday night, November 18, in a speech to Rhodes College, Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) Representative to the United States, delivered a lecture entitled "Iraq: As U.S. Forces Stand Down, Who is Standing Up." Mr. Talabani discussed how to ensure that sacrifices made by Americans in Iraq will lead to a democratic and stable country.

"Who is standing up [in Iraq]?" asked Mr. Talabani. "We in the Kurdistan Region are. We are capable to lead Iraq to a new era, as we have proven. We overcame our internal conflicts to establish a Regional government that united the warring political parties. We have worked hard to secure our area from the scourge of terrorism and extremism. We are proud today that not one American has been killed, injured in combat or kidnapped in the Kurdistan Region."

One of the most notable achievements in the Kurdistan Region came this past July when there was a historic set of elections for the Region's president and Parliament, which were hailed by international organizations and observers as free and fair.

"The Kurdistan Region showed the rest of Iraq and the world what we all knew: that we know how to take strong steps to make our country better—that we know how to stand up for democracy," Mr. Talabani said.

Mr. Talabani, who was invited to Rhodes College by David Romano, Assistant Professor of the Department of International Studies, also addressed the pro-business environment that is taking hold in the Kurdistan Region.

"Our market oriented policies and visions have turned the Kurdistan Region into an attractive investment environment," said Mr. Talabani. "We are working on a robust transparency and good governance strategy, which will give us the tools to combat corruption and improve and make more transparent, our procurement and tendering procedures, while streamlining our bureaucracy," Mr. Talabani added.

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As the Kurdistan Region works to build a strong foundation of democracy and capitalism, the area has begun to repair old divisions. "The Kurdistan region has worked hard with Turkey to improve upon our already strong economic relations to build stronger political and security relations."

"While Iraqis of all walks of life have stood up to overcome the gravest of challenges, including terrorism, sectarian violence, political stalemates and regional interference, we remain well aware that in order for the U.S. to stand down, and Iraqis to stand up, in a sustainable and viable federal democracy, continued U.S. engagement, and more importantly, continued U.S. interest in Iraq is paramount," said Mr. Talabani.

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